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DECEMBER 1961

The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

Darkness and Light JOHN KROMMINGA

Religion as the Enemy of Faith HUGH A. KOOPS

Progressive Revelation and the Christian Life ROGER VAN HARN

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REFORMED JOURNAL BOOK CLUB

Letters to the Journal; Index to Volume XI

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Volume XI No. 11

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THE REFORMED JOURNAL BOOK CLUB

"This will be the last issue of *Coronet,*" wrote the editors of the twenty-five-year-old magazine which "enjoyed" a circulation of more than two million copies when the decision to discontinue became mandatory. "Though the reasons for the demise of the magazine are etched in the red ink of the business ledger," they said, "a magazine is, paradoxically, something other than a business. It is a living contact. . . . At select intervals it crosses deserts, mountains, rivers and even continents, delivering its message to advocates who await it with their special pride of special choice. It gives off a glow of personality as it confides its discreet observations on worldly matters, with its own champions, as friends are confident of each other. . . ."

Well said! And the point is *not* the always pertinent one that publishing a periodical such as *The Reformed Journal* is costly and performed at a "loss." At this time we would rather again observe that it is "something other than a business." 1962 marks the beginning of our twelfth year in making some attempt to be of service to the Christian community by means of a periodical of Reformed comment and opinion.

We are taking this occasion to inaugurate *The Reformed Journal Book Club.* The details of this thrift plan for *RJ* subscribers are detailed on page two of this issue. The initial selection of three books appears on page twenty-three.

We are most happy about our first selection of books — the notable commentary on Romans and Thessalonians by John Calvin, which is the fourth volume to appear in the new translation edited by David W. and Thomas F. Torrance; Grace Irwin's large and impressive biographical novel of John Newton (1725-1807), prodigal sailor, slave-trader, and eminent Calvinist churchman and hymn writer; and the unique volume by David Wynbeek, advertising manager of *The Reformed Journal,* who has chosen the middle way between the popular story and the scholarly monograph to present the dedicated life of David Brainerd (1718-1747), the young Calvinist missionary to the American Indians.

Happy reading! And — we cannot refrain from stressing the obvious — here is a splendid opportunity for *you* to encourage your friends to subscribe to the *Journal* and to participate in the year-round savings which *RJBC* makes possible.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

It was night when Jesus was born — not only on the clock in the Bethlehem Inn, but on the clock of the world's history. In the one respect it was, as the song tells us, a holy night. In the other respect it was anything but that. It was a black night — no moon, no stars, no faint glow of eventide or first blush of dawn. The night was thick, dark, and oppressive, like the night of the ninth plague. The Sun of Righteousness came to earth in the depth of the night of sin.

The sin was no shallow shortcoming to be overcome by some ancient version of the power of positive thinking. It was a radical evil. Regulations could not overcome it. In fact, they succumbed to it. The evils of the day were countenanced by law and accepted by the conscience. Every generation wrote its own footnotes to Paul's first chapter to the Romans. The sinful heart of man was darkened and hardened. Nothing less than a radical remedy for a radical sin would suffice.

The religious feelings of men were not equal to the challenge. They failed. Religions mystical, materialistic, nationalistic, dualistic — they failed singly and they failed in combination. Even the triple aspirin of eclecticism could not alleviate the world's headache. Nothing less than the truth divinely revealed and humbly accepted would suffice.

There was no lack of human achievement in those days. Have we genius to equal the Greeks? Have we a lawgiver like Rome? But even Greece and Rome and Judea at their point of convergence could not provide the light to dispel the darkness.

Nothing less than a Virgin Birth; nothing less than God in Christ; nothing less than a Divine Lamb would suffice.

And — joy to the world — this is what God gave!

* * * *

Night closes in on us again. The parallel is so obvious that it need not be belabored. We have high achievements, too. But Atlas and Jupiter, bearing their precious cargo of astronauts and cosmonauts and dogs and mice and monkeys, have not yet stormed the gates of heaven. This is a war-scarred and bomb-scared world. From Nero to Khrushchev, what have we gained? From Plato to Peale, how we have retrogressed!

The blinding glare of atomic explosions reveals no heaven, no reconciliation, but only the rottenness of sin. Russia denies Christianity and China engulfs it. Even in "Christian" nations, moral standards are officially relativized. Deviations are countenanced by public conscience and by law. We have, so we profess, no sin any more; only psychoses and neuroses.

Christianity has become a vague word, a mixed witness, a flickering light. Some Christians have lost the light and do not know it. Others have it and hide it.

Has the light of Christmas gone out of the world? No, this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light. Footnotes are still being written to Romans One.

Do we suggest, then, that Christ must come again soon? It is a temptation to do so; but of that day and that hour knoweth no man. We write to suggest a simpler, but no less profound truth. This truth we do know; of this we are clearly told; this is given us that we may reckon with it.

This is the truth: that nothing less than the Virgin-born Christ; nothing less than the reconciling love of God; nothing less than the stupendous Incarnation, leading to the staggering sacrifice, and on to the smashing victory — nothing less will suffice.

Believing and preaching this, let us rejoice in the day of Christ's birth.

—John Kromminga

Religion As the Enemy of Faith

by Hugh A. Koops

IN 1539, WITH CALVIN BANISHED FROM GENEVA, Cardinal Sadolet addressed an appeal to the citizens of Geneva. He encouraged them to abandon the Protestant Reformation. The reward he offered for a return to the Roman Catholic Church was the blessedness of eternal salvation.

Although Calvin was in Strasbourg, he felt compelled to respond to this letter from Sadolet in behalf of the citizens of Geneva. In his now famous reply, he shrugged off the promises of the cardinal. While eternal blessedness was certainly desirable, it was not and could not be decisive. Calvin chided the cardinal for making such a promise, and suggested that it had been made "to recommend yourself by giving some indication of religious feeling."[1] Then Calvin continued with his theological criticism:

> It is not very sound theology to confine a man's thoughts so much to himself, and not to set before him, as the prime motive of his existence, zeal to illustrate the glory of God. For we are born first of all for God, and not for ourselves.

Human concern for eternal blessedness should not stem from the advantages man may acquire in such blessedness, but rather from the fact that God has united "the glory of his name . . . indissolubly with our salvation." It remains the glory of God's name, and not his own salvation, that man is to seek.

> This zeal ought to exceed all thought and care for our own good and advantage, and since natural equity also teaches that God does not receive what is his own, unless he is preferred to all things, it certainly is the part of a Christian man to ascend higher than merely to seek and secure the salvation of his own soul. I am persuaded, therefore, that there is no man imbued with true piety, who will not consider as insipid that long and laboured exhortation to zeal for heavenly life, a zeal which keeps a man entirely devoted to himself, and does not, even by one expression, arouse him to sanctify the name of God.

It is evident from this reply of Calvin that he realized the possibility of concern for salvation becoming the enemy of true worship. Soteriological religion may become the enemy of faith.

BUT WHAT IS RELIGION, THAT IT MAY BECOME THE enemy of faith? Calvin presents this definition:

> Here indeed is pure and real religion: faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that this fear also embraces willing reverence, and carries with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed in the law. And we ought to note this fact even more diligently: all men have a vague general veneration for God, but very few really reverence him; and wherever there is great ostentation in ceremonies, sincerity of heart is rare indeed.[2]

It is to be noted that this definition of religion appears in the first book of *The Institutes of the Christian Religion.* It is this book which deals with the knowledge of God as Creator, while later books deal with redemption. Calvin thus defines religion apart from redemption. His definition of religion is not necessarily soteriological.[3] We have already observed that Calvin recognized the dangers involved in concentrating upon human salvation. But here, when defining religion apart from concern for one's own salvation, Calvin speaks of the dangers of religion. The universality of religion does not guarantee its sincerity. And later Calvin speaks of those who are by nature religious:

> They do not therefore apprehend God as he offers himself, but imagine him as they have fashioned him in their own presumption.[4]

What we observe in Calvin, therefore, is that religion, whether conceived in soteriological or in non-soteriological terms, can be both good and bad. While religion bears witness to the presence of a revelation from God, this revelation is generally perverted.

Hendrik Kraemer comments on the difficulty of defining religion. Some religions, though soteriological, "are religions without a world beyond, without God(s) and faith in God(s)."[5] On the other hand, like Calvin, Kraemer acknowledges that religion may be defined without reference to salvation, but with stress upon a relation of reverence toward the transcendent.

FROM THE CONFUSION IN DEFINING RELIGION, KRAEmer moves to comment on the ambivalent character of religion.[6] He finds religions both "creative and destructive, salutary and corruptive, sublime and demonic."[7] Because of this ambivalent character, religion has constantly been criticized. Kraemer sees its criticism as of two kinds: the prophetic, which advocates the honor and majesty of God, and the philosophical, which advocates the independence and dignity of human reason.[8]

The ambivalent character of religion receives a more explicit theological explanation, in the tradi-

1. These quotations are taken from Calvin's "Reply to Cardinal Sadolet's Letter," in *Tracts and Treatises on the Reformation of the Church,* Vol. I, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1958, pp. 33f.

2. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion,* I, ii, 2.

3. This is not to say that Calvin would define religion apart from any reference to Christ, as both Barth and Brunner are ready to insist as well. In *The Institutes* Christ is presented as prominent in creation. His role is not merely redemptive. Consider, for instance, Calvin's treatment of the trinity in Book I, on the knowledge of God as Creator.

4. *The Institutes,* I, iv, 1.

5. *Religion and the Christian Faith,* by Hendrik Kraemer, Lutterworth Press, London, 1956, p. 38.

6. *Ibid.,* cf. paragraph heading, p. 37.

7. *Ibid.,* p. 38.

8. *Ibid.,* p. 40.

tion of Calvin, from Emil Brunner.[9] In the Christian interpretation of religion, which profits from the naturalistic-psychological theory, the sociological theory, and the theory of transcendental philosophy, there is a "new element" which transforms and integrates the other explanations.

> This new element is a twofold thesis: the religions, religious life of the natural man, are the product of the original divine revelation and of human sin.[10]

The phenomenon of religion cannot be understood apart from "real revelation." This revelation is not a historical entity, but rather the presupposition of every individual and collective existence. It is not so much a matter of the past, but a present reality. Yet the doctrine of original revelation is not the whole truth; "the other half is the doctrine of original sin."[11] By man's sinful blindness, God becomes idolized.

Through the doctrine of original sin Brunner explains the presence of evil in religion. He could endorse the comment of A. N. Whitehead:

> Religion is by no means necessarily good. It may be very evil. History, to the present day, is a melancholy record of the horrors which can attend religion.[12]

However, in any consideration of religion as the enemy of faith, we should not only consider those who say that religion may become the enemy of faith, such as Calvin, Kraemer, and Brunner. More specifically, we must also consider those who assert that religion *is* the enemy of faith, is always and must always be the enemy of faith. We must consider, if briefly, Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

BARTH DEALS WITH THIS MATTER IN HIS *Church Dogmatics.*[13] He insists that God's revelation is totally His revelation. Revelation depends wholly upon God. Yet it happens to man, and thus takes shape in human experience and action. This side of revelation we call the Christian religion. It presents a problem in theology because it often appears analogous to other religions.

Faith is the recognition and acceptance of God's revelation. This means, says Barth, that religion is unbelief. Religion is the quest for God, not the acceptance of His self-revelation. Revelation makes religion unnecessary. The God revealed need not be sought after. Revelation is proof of religion's failure. Religions are attempts at self-justification; faith is the acceptance of divine justification.

Briefly, we may comment on the two critiques that are made of Barth. The first is largely formal, and is prompted by Barth's condemnation of religion. Religion is a human production. It is an attempt at self-justification, as are all human productions. But what prevents Barth's theologizing, which is also a human production, from sharing in the condemnation Barth makes of religion? How can Barth's theology be true, when religion is not true, though both are human? Surely, even Barth's extreme self-consciousness of the sovereignty of God cannot keep his work from being his own product.

A second critique to be made of Barth is directed to the substance of his comments, whereas the first attacked his consistency, although it is closely related to it. Why his pessimistic anthropology? God's sovereignty is seen best in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, in the Incarnation. God works within man; this is not a threat to His sovereignty, but a means toward the maintenance of His sovereignty. One does not maintain the sovereignty of God by degrading humanity. Cannot religion be defined in such a way as to acknowledge a legitimate human response to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ? To be sure, this religion is not identical with Christianity. It is but the Christian religion. Like every other human phenomenon, religion also must be transformed, fulfilled, and judged by Jesus Christ.[14]

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER'S CRITICISMS OF RELIGION APpear primarily in the collection of his letters from prison,[15] but also in his posthumous work on Christian ethics.[16] He expresses his appreciation for Barth's criticism, but rejects Barth's total emphasis upon revelation as the alternative to religion. He does insist, with Barth, upon the theological foundation of justification by grace. Religion, when conceived as a precondition for faith, or salvation, must be condemned. When so conceived, religion receives the same attacks that were directed by Paul against circumcision.[17]

Bonhoeffer identifies several features of religion with which he disagrees.[18] They are: (1) the concern for a metaphysics,[19] (2) the concentration upon individual salvation,[20] (3) the often accompanying deistic conception of God,[21] and (4) the split between the sacred and the secular, resulting in the partial concerns of religion. "The religious act is always something partial; faith is always something whole, an act involving the whole life."[22]

Since religion is condemned as an attempt at self-

9. *Revelation and Reason,* by Emil Brunner, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, London, 1946. Cf. especially chapter 7, "Revelation and Religion."
10. *Ibid.,* p. 262.
11. *Ibid.,* p. 263.
12. From *Religion in the Making,* p. 7. Quoted by Kraemer, *op. cit.,* p. 39.
13. *Church Dogmatics,* Vol. I, Part 2, Scribner's, New York, 1956. Cf. p. 17, under the heading, "Revelation as the Abolition of Religion."
14. Cf. Brunner, *op. cit.,* pp. 272-274.
15. *Prisoner for God,* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Macmillan, New York, 1960.
16. *Ethics,* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Macmillan, New York, 1955.
17. *Prisoner for God,* pp. 123, 149.
18. These features have been identified by Eberhard Bethge in the Alden-Tuthill lectures at Chicago Theological Seminary, January, 1961, in the third lecture on "Liberation: Christianity without Religion," p. 17ff.
19. *Prisoner for God,* p. 125.
20. *Ibid.,* p. 125.
21. *Ibid.,* p. 124.
22. *Ibid.,* p. 124. Quotation from p. 167.

justification by good works, it is helpful to consider Bonhoeffer's understanding of good and evil. He repeatedly denies that Christian ethics is concerned with the question of the good. It is not the good which is to be sought, but the will of God, which has been made known in the revelational reality of Jesus Christ, to whom the Christian is to be conformed.

The religious man is the good man. Because he is concerned with his own justification (a concern which should be insignificant, even though justification itself is very important[23]), he is always concerned with the knowledge of good and evil. The Pharisee is such a man. But this is not the man of faith. Faith delivers man from this concern for justification, from this involvement with the knowledge of good and evil. The religious man, the good man, is the man who has eaten from the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is the man who has fallen out of unity with God. He is no longer "at one with his origin."[24]

The critique of Bonhoeffer is similar to the critique of Barth. The fall must be taken seriously, not only as a theological explanation for the ambiguities of every human production, but also as the condition from within which every statement about the present human position must be made. The present situation is not brought to a solution by a rhapsody about the beauties of Paradise. We have religion. We cannot avoid the perils of religion by avoiding religion itself, for we cannot avoid religion. We possess the knowledge of good and evil. It may indeed mislead us. But we cannot deny it. And there are values in acknowledging not only its deficiencies, but also its inescapable presence. Was not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil already in the garden when God called the creation good?

BARTH IS CORRECT IN REMINDING US THAT RELIGION cannot be identified with revelation. Bonhoeffer is correct in reminding us that the knowledge of good and evil cannot be identified with conformation to the will of God revealed in Jesus Christ. But while the relationship between revelation and religion, between conformation to the will of God and the knowledge of good and evil, is not a relationship of identity, it is also not a relationship of opposition.

We can even go further. A relation of priority can be established. Religion can be placed in the service of revelation. The knowledge of good and evil can serve our conformation to the will of God. We may even be ready, as we ought to be should the opportunity arise, to sacrifice religion for the sake of revelation, to offer our knowledge of good and evil in behalf of conformation to the will of God, to give up our own salvation for the full achievement of God's purpose.[25] But it is not always necessary to destroy the structures of even our sinful world to serve God. Christ was willing to accept not only the conditions of humanity, such as hunger and thirst, but also the conditions of depravity, such as baptism and death, in order to make known to us the love of God. He came not to destroy, but to fulfill. Thus God unites "the glory of his name . . . indissolubly with our salvation."

23. Cf. *Prisoner for God*, p. 126.

24. Quotation from *Ethics*, p. 142. Bonhoeffer's discussion of the concept of the good in Christian ethics is found in the beginnings of Chapters II, IV, and VI. Chapter IV is particularly helpful, especially the section on "The Pharisee."

25. As Moses was prepared to do, Exodus 32:32, or Paul, Romans 9:3.

Progressive Revelation and the Christian Life (I)

by Roger Van Harn

THE HISTORY OF REVELATION SHOWS THAT THE GOSpel has been essentially the same throughout those long centuries during which it was revealed. From that Garden where God sought out Adam with the question "Where art thou?" to that Pentecost pulpit before which men asked "Brethren, what shall we do?" there has been a *oneness* in the Gospel which transcends and underlies every dispensational revelation of it. That *oneness* in the Gospel is necessary because of two equally important factors: the solidarity of the human race fallen in Adam, and the unchanging character of God as Holy and Gracious. God's initial reaction to the Fall — the declaration of His intention to destroy sin and redeem the sinner — discloses the essence of the Gospel which was revealed fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Reformed Christians faithfully guard this oneness of the Gospel by committing themselves to the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, which affirms the unity of the way of redemption in Christ from Eden to the modern world.

This oneness of the Gospel throughout the ages, however, does not mean uniformity in its revelation

and application. The Gospel could not have been as fully understood by Adam as it was by Moses. Nor could Moses have understood the Gospel as fully as Isaiah, whose descriptions of the Suffering Servant form an important link between the Old and New Covenants. Nor could Isaiah have understood the fullness of the Gospel in the same measure as did the disciples when the full Gospel was impressed indelibly on their hearts at the Ascension of Christ. There is *progress* in the revelation of the Gospel throughout the ages from Adam to Christ. The *progress* and the *oneness* of the Gospel are equally important to all who would understand and proclaim the message of the Scriptures. In the same way in which we trace the path and brilliance of the sun from dawn till noon, so we follow the unfolding of the Gospel from Eden through Christ. To affirm the *oneness* and the *progress* in the revelation of the Gospel is to take a stance against both an extreme dispensationalism which cancels out the oneness of the Gospel, and an extreme Calvinsm which would view redemption as the bare execution of a decree without regard for the conditioning factors of history.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF THE ONE GOSPEL throughout the Scriptures has some important implications for the Christian life. The revelation of the Gospel in any stage of unfolding called for a response of faith — a faith which needed expression in life. For faith and life are always organically one. They can be distinguished only by abstraction, and that only for the purpose of analysis. What a man believes determines his moral standard, however imperfectly he may obey it. What Adam and Abraham and Moses and Isaiah knew in faith God had done for their salvation, determined what they knew to be their duty, however imperfectly they measured up to it. Along with the progressive revelation of the Gospel there is a progressive revelation of the proper response to it. As the truth of the Gospel was unfolded the standard of obedience unfolded with it. As it became increasingly clear what men must believe, so it became increasingly clear how men must live before God. As the *oneness* and the *progress* of revelation must form our understanding of Christian truth, so these must shape our understanding of the Christian life.

If we hold that the one Gospel is progressively revealed in the Scriptures and that it received its full and final revelation in Jesus Christ, then an important task of Christian ethics becomes clear. We must trace the relationship between the revelation of redemption and the revelation of duty from Adam to Christ. We must trace the relationship of grace to law in each stage of the unfolding of the Gospel. "What has God revealed concerning His saving purposes with sinners?" and "What does God require of those on whom His grace has been bestowed?" are questions which must be asked of each new era in the history of revelation.[1] This approach to the history of revelation assumes that God's demands always come in the context of grace,[2] that there is a revelation of grace with reference to which the revelation of duty may always be compared. In taking this approach, further, we seek to establish that a right understanding of the revelation in Jesus Christ resists those two perennial threats to the Christian community: legalism and antinomianism. For legalism, which describes the Christian life in terms of obedience to law, fails to do justice to the *progress* of revelation. And antinomianism, which describes the Christian life in terms of rejection of law, fails to do justice to the *oneness* of revelation. Even as extreme dispensationalism and extreme Calvinism fail to do justice to the oneness and progress of the revelation of the Gospel, so also antinomianism and legalism fail to do justice to the oneness and progress of the revelation of ethical norms.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Adam

The first revelation of the Gospel and of man's duty in response to it appears in the Garden of Eden. One could expect in view of all that had gone before that when the Fall occurred, God would shut up the gates of Eden and turn it into the place of death. But such was not the case. The account of the Fall is followed by a description of God walking in the Garden, seeking Adam and calling him with the question, "Where art thou?" Here is a revelation of the Gospel. The very act of God entering the Garden and seeking Adam from his place of hiding is a revelation of the grace of God by which we are saved. The question indeed contains judgment, but the judgment is that which lies implicit in the process of redemption itself. The fact that Adam needs *finding* judges him to be *lost.* The grief in the Voice combines judgment and mercy, and resembles the grief of Jesus Christ in His triumphal entry and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The revelation of grace in the Garden is evident already in the fact that *God will allow history to continue.* History doesn't come to a crashing halt with the Fall. God enters the scene. He comes pretending not to know what has happened. He comes seeking that fellowship with Adam for which he was created and without which he would die. But God just pretends ignorance. He knows what happened. And He comes anyway! He comes not just in spite of what happened, but because of it. His-

1. In approaching Scripture this way we must be careful always to distinguish between the revelation of moral standards and the way men responded to them. For example, it is how Israel should have lived and not how Israel misbehaved that we must examine.

2. See "The Perfection of God" by James Daane, *Reformed Journal,* Dec. 1958.

tory continues after the Fall, but it continues with a new dimension — the forces of sin and grace are on the scene. Already as God seeks Adam these forces are locked in mortal combat. With an act which can be described only as sovereign grace, God continues history, re-enters the scene, seeks to re-establish the fellowship lost, and thus declares His intent to destroy sin and save the sinner.

The Gospel which is declared in God's act of seeking the hiding sinner is amplified in God's words which follow. Genesis 3:15 contains the first Gospel *preached.* God makes plain by speech that which He had already made known by an act. He declares that history will continue, but with a new dimension. A great antithesis will shape the course of history. It is an antithesis between sin and grace, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And the victory of grace is already assured.

This revelation of the truth of the Gospel pressed a duty upon Adam. Here the basic pattern of the whole history of revelation is established. The duty laid upon Adam corresponds to the revelation of the Gospel which he received. If God would continue history and pledge Himself to destroying sin and saving the sinner, then it is Adam's duty to continue in those tasks outlined for him before the Fall. He must continue to work. His marriage must be productive of children. He must till the earth from whence he was taken. The tasks remain essentially the same. But there is a new dimension to those tasks. Pain, toil, and struggle will now characterize his work. Survival is a new motive for work as Adam struggles against the consequences of his own sin. Adam's moral obligation corresponds to the revealed Gospel. If God will continue history and enter the struggle to destroy sin and redeem the sinner, then the sinner must continue to perform the tasks already assigned. And struggling against the consequences of his own sin, he will not be allowed to forget either the judgment or the grace of his Creator.

Abraham

As with Adam, so with Abraham. The revelation of the Gospel brought the revelation of a duty. With the progress in the unfolding of the Gospel we can expect (and find) a clearer revelation of the obligation which rests upon the redeemed sinner.

The Gospel in its new stage of revelation came to Abraham in the form of a promise. Or, better, it came to him in a series of promises. The opening verses of Genesis 12 introduce Abraham to us as one who receives a promise and a command. It is the *promise* which characterizes God's revelations of the Gospel to Abraham. Nothing essentially new is added to the Gospel already revealed. But the Gospel as a promise stands more clearly revealed in God's dealing with Abraham than with Adam. The promise is repeated and varied in its presentation (Genesis 12:2; 13:14-16; 15:1, 4, 5; 17:1-8, 19; 18: 14, 17, 18; 22:17, 18). God promises that history will continue. But the promise is more than that. There is redemptive significance to this specially chosen family of Abraham. Somehow through his seed God will bring great blessing to all the nations of the earth. To the fulfillment of that blessing and to the generations of Abraham's family God pledges Himself to complete fidelity.

The duty which this promise laid upon Abraham was to take God at His Word. Abraham is called to believe God's promise with a faith so childlike that it could remain constant even in the face of apparent contradiction. Along with the series of promises pronounced, there is a series of experiences by which faith in those promises was tested. To travel to an unknown country only on a promise was a test of faith. To receive the promise of a child at their age without laughing was a test of faith. To offer up the promised son without question was the supreme test. In the case of Abraham as in the case of Adam the obligation corresponded to the Gospel revealed. And in the revelation to both, the Gospel is essentially the same.

But in God's dealing with Abraham the Gospel revelation reaches a new height. Not only will God continue history and engage in a redemptive struggle against sin, but He will give this family of Abraham a significant place in the history of that struggle. The place is of universal significance, for it ultimately involves the nations of the world. To bring about that great blessing God pledges Himself faithfully to preserve that family. Abraham's duty corresponds to his receiving the promise. To Adam God says: I will continue history and defeat sin; you must keep on working. To Abraham God says: You and your family will have a significant place in that history of defeating sin; trust Me with childlike simplicity. Together, these show the oneness and the progress of revelation.

Moses

Recalling Moses to mind reminds us of the Law given on Mt. Sinai. But to treat the law apart from the revelation of the Gospel to Israel leads to a misunderstanding of the place which the law was to occupy in the life of Israel. St. Paul reminds us that "a covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect" (Galatians 3:17). The law must be seen in the light of the partial fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. To put it another way, the law may never be divorced from its preface. "I am the Lord thy God . . ." was to remind Israel of that sovereign and gracious act of deliverance in which the Gospel reached new heights and the promise to Abraham unfolded.

Under the leadership of Moses God revealed to Israel the Gospel of grace. The sovereign power of God operating for the redemption of His people was nothing less than a majestic display of grace. The promise to Abraham received a partial fulfillment in the deliverance of Israel from the oppression of Egypt. God's faithfulness to the seed of Abraham was confirmed in that act of deliverance. And the promise received a new clarity in God's pledge to bring Israel into the Promised Land in which father Abraham had dwelt. The deliverance from Egypt and the promised entrance to the land of Canaan represented the covenant faithfulness of Jehovah. These redemptive works of God were to shape their faith and motivate their obedience. To forget these redemptive works of God through which the Gospel of grace was revealed was to be unfaithful to God. Great pains were taken to impress these works of God on the mind of Israel and to perpetuate them in the memory of the children. In the preface to the decalogue (Exodus 20:2), in the Sabbath commandment (Deuteronomy 5:15), in the institution of the passover (Exodus 13:11-16), and in the erection of a monument (Joshua 4:1-7), God impressed His grace on the mind of Israel.

In all of this the message to Israel is clear. Israel is impotent and unworthy. By grace they are saved from Egypt and brought to Canaan. The promise was not only given to Abraham in grace, but it is fulfilled in grace. Where grace abounded to Abraham, it super-abounded to Israel.

In the light of that progressive unfolding of the Gospel we must view the progressive unfolding of human responsibility which it brings. That responsibility is clearly set forth in the giving of the law through Moses, the same mediator under whose leadership that grace was made effective. We do not need to distinguish here between the civil, ceremonial and moral laws. These are difficult to categorize since there were civil and ceremonial elements in what is commonly called the moral law (decalogue), and the civil and ceremonial laws are full of moral implications. Let it be sufficient to say that the progressive unfolding of duty is set down in the laws given through Moses.

The giving of the law through Moses carried the revelation of duty to a new height which corresponded to the revelation of grace. Israel was required to yield unwavering obedience to the detailed prescriptions of the law. To do so was not to cancel out the promise and render grace unnecessary. On the contrary, faithfulness to the prescriptions of the law would serve always to expose Israel's unworthiness of the grace received and to point out the path of gratitude. Grace was to remain at the heart of Israel's religion. The law was detailed and precise because it was given to an undisciplined and ignorant people who were bent on backsliding. But the magnitude of the law was not meant to eclipse the magnitude of grace. It was to serve the purposes of grace in the life of Israel. It was to remind the people each day and especially each Sabbath of the grace of which they were unworthy and to which they owed their all in gratitude. Thus obeyed, the law would become a tutor to lead Israel to the fullness of grace displayed in Jesus Christ.[3]

The Tabernacle

The ceremonies of worship in the Tabernacle may well be treated under the law of Moses. But the Tabernacle has significance enough in the progress of revelation to warrant independent attention.

The design of the Tabernacle revealed the function of a Mediator. The holiness of God was gloriously displayed in the architecture and the services. The cloud which hovered above, the unapproachable Holy of holies, the limited access of the worshipper to the outer court, the prominence of the brazen altar — all reminded the worshipper that God is holy. The sinner cannot stand in His direct presence. Nor will God tolerate a transgressor in the inner chamber. Yet the glorious truth which the Tabernacle proclaimed was that *fellowship is possible.* Indeed, the very purpose of the Tabernacle was to provide a place for God and His people to meet. This meeting (fellowship) was possible through mediators. The priests, and the sacrifices which they offered, were both types of the mediatorial work of Christ. Through the priest who offered the sacrifice, the Israelite could meet his God.

The corresponding duty which fell to the Israelites was simply to be faithful in Tabernacle worship. To fail in this faithfulness was to deny both the holiness and the grace of God. To worship in self-appointed places was to ignore the need for a Mediator and was an attempt to work out one's own salvation. That the Israelites may be unforgettably impressed with their need for a Mediator, faithfulness in worship was enjoined. Lest they forget the holiness and grace of God, the Tabernacle marked the center of the camp. The Tabernacle brought the revelation of the Gospel and the revelation of duty closer to Christ.

(*To be continued*)

3. Great care must be exercised in the use of the Old Testament formulation of the law (decalogue) in that part of our worship services which is called the *Service of Reconciliation.* To a typical American who understands neither the radical demands of God's will as revealed in Christ, nor the radical nature of sin, nor the grace in Christ to which that law directs, a reading of the "ten commandments" is likely to leave him in his self-righteousness by which he supposes that the ten commandments are the *sine qua non* of his religion-in-general. On the contrary, to the sensitive worshipper, who does understand the radical demands of God's will which the decalogue foreshadows, using the law apart from a clear reference to grace tends to leave him without assurance and in despair.

Pitch Your Tents Toward Sodom*

by Ernest Van Vugt

THE LIFE STORY OF LOT IS A DISAPPOINTING ONE. IT showed such promise at its beginning, but ended in such utter failure. While he was closely associated with Abraham things went well, but from the time that he separated from his uncle and "pitched his tent toward Sodom" one disaster seems to have followed another. With the defeat of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah he is taken captive, but when rescued by Abraham he returns to Sodom and his former life. When next we hear of him, certain destruction is imminent. There follows in rapid succession these events: Lot's escape from Sodom, the destruction of the cities, the miraculous metamorphosis of his wife, the flight of Lot and his two daughters to the mountains, and the machinations of these two daughters whereby Lot unwittingly became the progenitor of the children of Ammon and Moab. On this ominous note his story ends. He seems to have lost everything — excepting his own soul, for the Apostle Peter in his second epistle refers to him as "that righteous man."

This story may on the surface seem to have a very simple moral lesson to teach, namely, that the Christian cannot associate with unbelievers with impunity; that whenever he does go out into the world his own moral stability is bound to be shaken and the salvation of his family gravely imperiled. Thus it was with Lot.

BUT SURELY IT IS NOT TRUE THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS must always give ground in the face of unrighteousness; that truth must forever be on the defensive, and fight a losing battle at that. St. Paul was often most successful as a missionary in the cities where wickedness of every kind, including that sin to which Sodom has given its name, seemed to control the minds of men.

Can it be then that the missionary is alone responsible for extending the frontiers of Christ's kingdom, and that the mission station is to be the sole outpost of his army? Although there may not be many who would say so, there are many who by their actions give assent to that position. But certainly that is not the only kind of action by which Christianity in the early centuries of our era transformed the world. In addition to the missionaries there were the many in the professions, in industry, and in politics who brought their Christianity to bear upon the culture in which they found themselves and so helped to transform it.

Was it not then a mistake for Lot to "pitch his tent toward Sodom"? In the light of the outcome it would be difficult to deny that it was. But it was so not merely because he was righteous, and "the men of the city wicked exceedingly before the Lord." At any rate, Abraham did not try to dissuade Lot from going. And what arguments could he have used? He himself was living among the heathen.

THERE IS AN ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE two men, and in this difference there lies in part the reason why Lot should not have moved to Sodom. Abraham was very much aware of his calling. It is said of him that he "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," and that he "desired a better country, that is, an heavenly." But "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where," and he seemed to forget that he was but a "stranger and a pilgrim on the earth." Motivated by the desire for riches he cut himself and his family off from the people of God, that is, from Abraham and his house, and enticed by the allurements of the cities of the plain he soon left off living in tents, the symbol of the pilgrim, and moved into Sodom. Lot erred then in forgetting that the believer has here "no abiding city," and that though riches increase we are not to set our heart upon them.

It would also seem that Lot forgot the responsibility to be a witness, a responsibility incumbent upon each Christian in his confrontation with the world. Abraham was certain that there were fifty righteous within the city, but there were not even ten. He must have been disappointed in Lot's ineffective witness. Perhaps the fact that "Lot vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (as Peter says) is an indication that he did not forget his responsibility but was either afraid to witness or ill-equipped for it. This is indicated in the episode in which the men of Sodom come to his house demanding that he hand over to them the men whom they supposed to be his guests. Lot does not stand up for the right, but offers them his daughters instead, hoping to check evil with evil.

ALTHOUGH IT IS LOT'S WIFE THAT SCRIPTURE admonished us to remember, we ought not ignore Lot himself. But I do not think that his biography gives us an excuse to isolate ourselves in fear as though what God has given us is merely to be preserved by us and not shared with others. It does, however, serve to point out the dangers involved in our encounters with wickedness, and illustrates the high

* First presented as a chapel talk at Calvin College.

price that one who leaves the safety of the Christian community can pay for his failure to be adequately prepared and wholly committed to advance the cause of truth.

No man who lacks the courage of his convictions (or worse yet, lacks convictions) and no man who does not understand the issues involved should in his naïveté venture into the contemporary Sodoms as a quixotic champion of the truth and thus perhaps do more harm than good for the cause of truth. For truth is often an object of contempt to the wicked because it lacks suitable defenders. But was there ever a time when the world was in greater need of such to witness for the truth?

In my use of the word witness I am not thinking of those who stand on the street corner handing out tracts. They have their place, but I use the word as Whittaker Chambers, the ex-Communist, uses it in his book, *Witness.* He says, "A man is not primarily a witness *against* something. That is only incidental to the fact that he is a witness *for* something. A witness in the sense that I am using the word is a man whose life and faith are so completely one that when the challenge comes to step out and testify for his faith, he does so, disregarding all risks, accepting all consequences."

Are the seminary and Bible institute graduates alone expected to be witnesses of that kind? I don't underestimate the need for ministers and missionaries. Nineveh was saved from destruction through the witness of the prophet Jonah. But Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, and their destruction might have been averted had Lot, a businessman, been a more effective witness.

Tom Allan in his stimulating book, *The Face of My Parish,* makes this significant statement: "It is generally accepted that the effective propagation of the Faith in the secular world depends ultimately on the witness of the layman. In a pamphlet issued a year or two ago by the Scottish Churches Ecumenical Committee the necessity of lay witness is put as clearly as it could be: 'How is the Christian message to be presented to the world, for the world which nowadays will scarcely attend a political meeting is still less likely to attend a religious one. The message, then, must be delivered at the point where the Christian front meets and engages the world — i.e., at that part of the Church witnessing to the Faith in their daily avocations.'"

No one has a greater responsibility to provide that kind of witness than does the graduate of a Christian liberal arts college, and no one has a better opportunity to prepare for that kind of service than does the student at such a college. Here through the various disciplines you can be led not only to a clearer understanding of the truth in its various manifestations, you can also be taught not to be content to condemn your culture, but to assess it, to evaluate it, and to correct and reform it in the light of Truth as personified in Christ.

It is frequently said that education in a Christian college is training for Christian leadership. I can agree with that, but if it be maintained that Christian leadership is nothing more than the leading of Christians by fellow Christians either in the various activities of the Church or in any phase of living, then I must demur. I don't wish to play down the need for more and better leadership in our Christian communities, but it is precisely the areas not touched by the normal activities of the Christian community that are most in need of vital Christian leadership.

Many of you will upon leaving here pitch your tents near to Jerusalem. That is as it should be, and you will find enough of the spirit of Sodom there to demand the best that you have. I urge others of you to prepare to pitch your tents toward Sodom — some of you toward the Sodom of politics, others toward the Sodom of science, of the arts, of industry, and wherever such as you are needed. But do not ask what Sodom can do for you, but rather what you can do for Sodom and, being warned by the mistakes of Lot, act in the awareness of the high stakes involved. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for want of ten righteous. How many righteous may yet be needed to avert the threatened destruction of our civilization?

No one will deny that there are dangers in meeting the world on its own ground, but they are not as great as the dangers in living in the world on its own terms. And you need not go it alone! St. Peter ends his reference to Lot with these words, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations."

The Editors and Publisher of the Journal take this occasion to express the wish and prayer that all spiritual blessings in our Lord Jesus Christ may be yours in this hallowed season and in the days of the coming year.

Legalism and Moralism:

Characteristics of a Church Emerging from Paganism (II)

by Harry R. Boer

AN ASPECT OF THE LIFE OF THE YOUNGER CHURCHES that does not cease both to surprise and to puzzle the missionary community is the legalism of the church life and the moralism of the preaching and the teaching. The characteristic seems to be universal, and seems to bear relatively little relationship to the doctrinal or ecclesiastical emphasis of particular missions giving birth to particular churches. It is worth while inquiring into this circumstance, for the reason that it would seem to lay bare something that is profoundly significant in the life of the younger Churches not only, but also in those longer established.

When a pagan becomes a Christian he leaves behind the naturalistic cyclic form of existence, and he enters upon the redemptive historical order of existence. At the risk of seeming to be repetitious, I want to say again what this means. The naturalistic cyclic form of existence is the name given to the life that is lived in terms of nature and into which the redemptive grace of God has not entered. It is a life that goes on and on in an unending round of events that have no consummate purpose or goal. Birth and death, summer and winter, rise and fall, endless reincarnation — such is the cyclic movement of life that is characteristic of the life of paganism. As the writer of Ecclesiastes put it: "What has been is what will be, and what has been done will be done." It is a life without an eschatology.

Out of this life the convert enters upon the redemptive historical order of existence. His life is still conditioned by nature, for a child of nature he is and always will be. But this is no longer the basic determinant of his life. His life has been ushered into an historical redemptive area and movement which have eschatological purpose and consummation. This is the life of grace, which leads onward and upward to the eternal kingdom of God.

In an earlier article I discussed the significance for the life of the convert of the religious imagination that is part and parcel of the cyclic order of existence, and its carry-over into the redemptive historical order. A major result of this we found to be the continuing fear of the curse. In this article we want to look at another ineradicable characteristic of the cyclic order of existence and see what it continues to mean for the convert.

IT CANNOT BE STRESSED TOO STRONGLY THAT LIFE IN the cyclic movement of existence *is essentially a life lived under law.* In a pagan society everyone knows his place, and everyone knows his duties, his rights and his obligations. I have often been quite amazed how naturally schoolboys of a certain age will hand over books or other articles to younger boys to carry, and how unquestioningly such burdens are accepted. As the boy becomes man and the man grows older it becomes increasingly plain that seniority is of the essence of life. But seniority does not mean freedom. The senior is more bound, if anything, than his juniors. He is bound by the customs, the traditions, the rites and practices of the tribe. A profoundly fundamental reason for the utterly conservative character of pagan society is the fear to depart from what has been done before. The baleful look of ever observant ancestors viewing from ghostly inscrutability all that the living do has held whole societies helpless prisoners until unavoidable external influences made them yield to the new realities that asserted themselves. Law, rigorous, unyielding law, lies at the center of pagan life.

In contrast with this, grace forms the center of the life of the Christian. The Christian is not without law, but law is his servant, not his master. In Christ he is free. The "touch not, taste not, handle not" of paganism has been transcended by the "all things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient." Christian discernment exercising the liberty of Christ in love is the standard for action in the redemptive historical order of existence.

This is not to say that there is no grace in the cyclic order of existence, or no law in the redemptive order. It does mean that law and grace, bondage and freedom, are the supreme determinants of the life that is lived in each framework. In the one grace subserves law, in the other law subserves grace.

We may here, with all the weighty qualifications that have to be made with respect to the redemptive purpose of law in the Old Testament, cite as highly relevant the words of John's Prologue: "The law came through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Israel came out of and continued to live in a religious and cultural environment in which the cyclic movement of existence was determinative. The legal character of the Old Testament constitutes God's recognition of the past out of which Israel came and of its contemporary en-

vironment by which it continued to be influenced. The redemptive purpose of the legal character of Israel's life transcended the legalism of Israel's past and, indeed, of much of its own life, and transformed law into an instrument truly serving the ends of grace. Israel's failure to live up to the purpose for which the law was given, particularly as manifest in the Pharisaic incarnation of that failure, is essentially a harking back to the fleshpots of law as lived in the cyclic movement of existence in which law has no purpose beyond itself.

All of this bears a rather close relationship to the life of the younger Churches. It has long been the complaint of the more perceptive missionary community that there is so little appreciation evident in sermons preached in the younger Churches for faith and grace in their deeper dimensions. It has also been often observed that discipline in the Church is frequently not so much pastorally administered as juridically imposed. Christ tends in the preaching to become more an example for holy living than a Person in whom faith and trust are reposed, which faith and trust then *lead* to holy living. Similarly, discipline tends to become an enforcing of laws upon transgressors rather than an instrument of love and grace to correct and restore the wayward. The exercise of external authority rather than the appeal to internal commitment largely characterizes church discipline. In dealing with fornication in the Corinthian church St. Paul did not say, "Don't you know the seventh commandment?" but rather, "Know ye not that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?" In this emphasis the younger Churches need much to grow.

This situation we may deplore, but we should not be surprised at it. We should recognize it for what it is — the remnant of a long and powerful tradition of life lived in the cyclic movement of existence where law served only to preserve the status quo and to maintain the rhythmic movement of the cycle of life.

THE LEGALISM AND THE MORALISM OF THE YOUNGER Churches become even more significant when we relate them to the life of the early Church. The veneration in which we hold the early Church sometimes obscures the fact that it, too, was a younger Church, and had all the earmarks of one. It is an amazing and ungainsayable fact of history that in the period immediately following upon St. Paul there is little to be discerned of the Pauline theology of grace. There came into being what has been called "the new law," and moralism largely held sway in the life of the Church until St. Augustine again gave its rightful place to the doctrine of grace.

In his illuminating book, *The Doctrine of Grace in the Apostolic Fathers,* T. F. Torrance observes,

> There can be no doubt that in the early Church, as in the mission field today, the converts of the first few generations had great difficulty in apprehending the distinctive aspects of the Gospel, as for example the doctrine of Grace. It was so astoundingly new to the natural man (p. 136).

It would be difficult to find more conclusive external evidence for the divine revelatory character of St. Paul's message than the incontestable fact that his doctrine of grace juts out as a mountain without foothills on a plain of Judaistic legalism before him and of early-Church moralism immediately after him. Christ had come and given His Spirit to the Church. This explains St. Paul. But how must we explain the declension from St. Paul in the early Church and in younger Churches today who have been brought to Christ through a ministry of grace?

The retrogression is fundamentally due, I think, to the coexistence and intimate conjunction in the Christian community of the old aeon and the new aeon. The new aeon is already here, and the old aeon is still here. The naturalistic cyclic movement of existence continues to project itself into the Christian life. It is a humbling thought that this projection continues in the life of the older Churches, with more sophistication, it is true, with more rationalization, but often with great force. As the Pharisees of Christ's time thought their legalism the highest expression of religion, so some in our day often find in legalism the essence of the true Christian life. Its existence in the younger Churches is wholly explainable. It is more difficult to explain in the older churches which ought to have attained more maturity in the truth of the gospel.

Even so, the old aeon shows itself more starkly in the Church on the mission field than it does in the older Churches. The reason for this is that there the old aeon had until recently, and still has in the whole of the environment of the younger Churches, a completely independent and unchallenged position.

FROM ALL THIS IT IS NOT TO BE CONCLUDED THAT faith and grace are not the dominant motifs in the life of the younger Churches. We must always remember that the misunderstanding of grace need not undo its work or its effects. All our understanding of the mysteries of salvation is partial. In the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, faith in and love for Christ can and often do transcend misapprehension of the nature of that love and of that faith. By the same token, the true character of faith and love cannot be guaranteed by doctrinal formulations. Orthodoxy in doctrine and sterility in Christian life are familiar companions in the history of the Church. And the spirituality of unlettered Christians frequently outstrips that of more learned ones. Nowhere is this more true than

in the younger Churches. Regeneration and conversion have taken place; sanctification is going on. Where this can be said, grace and faith are the roots through which the Church draws the sap of life. The legalism and moralism in Church life seem, on the one hand, to be channels through which grace and faith come to initial expression and, on the other hand, they are weaknesses to which the Church tends again and again to revert.

The shortcomings of the younger Churches are shortcomings of the Church universal. Where there is openness to grace they can be diminished in power; they can never be wholly eliminated. To the end of time the old aeon and the new aeon will live in conjunction and in struggle. But in this struggle the Church may, as in more direct confrontations with the evil world, be comforted by the words of Christ,

In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

More Needed Changes

by J. K. van Baalen

IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE COMMITTEE appointed by the Christian Reformed Church to revise its liturgical Formularies may well go beyond improving upon the Form for the Lord's Supper. Being in full accord with this, I herewith point to two or three additional desirable changes.

First: The Form for Infant Baptism

There appears to be a determined movement among Reformed people recently come from the Netherlands to have the sacrament of baptism administered "as soon as possible," which may mean upon two, three, or even four successive Sundays. In at least one case this is known to have resulted in infant baptism being administered upon nine successive Lord's Days. That this was not to the edification of the congregation was admitted by the officiating minister who, upon the ninth successive Sunday, read an abbreviated Form of his own making (a case in the Netherlands, but quoted in *De Wachter*).

While it is conceded that the practice of baptizing infants on the very first possible occasion has the backing of very early, and also of some later Reformed Synods, no convincing argument for this practice has been advanced to the knowledge of this writer. Personally, he is persuaded that a monthly opportunity for the administration of this sacrament is sufficient. It certainly is fully as warranted as the observance of the eucharist once in three months. Had we sons of Calvin not encumbered the latter sacrament with a "preparatory sermon," a lengthy "Form for the Lord's Supper," plus a "post-communion sermon," we should, in all likelihood, not have wandered so far from the practice of the early Church, and the demand of Calvin, both of which insisted upon the Lord's Supper as an integral part of worship upon every Sabbath day. As it is now, there is a discrepancy in the manner in which we honor the two sacraments.

However, I am willing to waive these important points and to grant without further ado that we should baptize infants "as soon as possible" — with the one proviso that the mother should be present as well as the father. That her interest in the matter is as great as that of her husband seems to go without saying. But it must also be granted that it ill becomes a mother to be seen in public worship upon several occasions before her baby is presented for baptism ("on the first Sunday when the weather is nice, Pastor").

No Formulary Necessary

It is my studied conviction that it is neither edifying nor necessary to regale an entire congregation with a too frequent exposition of "the principal parts of baptism," as though the matter of infant baptism were something hitherto totally unknown or questioned in Reformed circles.

There is a better way, if we wish to make every Lord's Day a baptismal Sunday. We have catechism classes, where such indoctrination can and should be given. Moreover, we have Bible study groups for young married people, for older women, and for men.

On top of all this, it is the good custom in many Reformed congregations for parents who wish to have their infant(s) baptized, to attend upon a brief session either with the minister or with one or more elders in order to fill out a blank with the names of the parents, the infant(s), and the latter's date(s) of birth. Here, then, is a better opportunity to discuss the matter with the parents, and to ascertain that they know what they will be doing on the coming Sabbath day.

This more personal discussion, then, would also eliminate the necessity of a Form being read before all the congregation upon three or four successive Sundays (or even twice on one Sunday, as I have been personally obliged to do upon at least two occasions). Any Form that is repeated too fre-

quently tends to lose its charm and its power to edify.

If, however, we of the Christian Reformed Church are not ready for such a change, but will insist upon reading the present Form in its entirety before the whole congregation whenever parents ask for it, one or two changes seem to be imperative.

Suggested Changes

In case the Form is to be maintained, I have no suggestions for the main body of the present Form. I am in full agreement with its doctrinal implications and find it excellently written. It would seem, however, that the questions to the parents could stand improvement.

I worshiped one day in a Presbyterian Church where three infants were presented for baptism. No lengthy Form was read in which the congregation was informed as to the meaning of baptism. It was taken for granted that this is the confessed knowledge of the church.

The minister, however, took each child from the parents, and asked the latter, "Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so, do you now again confess your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour; and do you desire to have the sacrament of baptism register the fact that your child is with you an heir to that same covenant?" This was answered with "We do"; whereupon each child was baptized, and a prayer for the children and parents concluded the brief ceremony.

This did not only appear to be sufficient, but in this brief question was an element that is lacking in the Form used in Christian Reformed Churches. We ask for loyalty to "the aforesaid doctrine," without a personal confession of receiving in faith the blessings of the covenant.

This, it will be noted, has been a weakness in Reformed liturgy all along the line. We have been onesidedly strong in stressing the necessity of adhering to "the complete doctrine of salvation," but weak in the demand of a personal confession of receiving in faith the blessings of the covenant.

Thus, when the highly unsatisfactory questions that formerly were in use for a public confession of faith were displaced by the current Form, a great deal of argumentation was required before the Christian Reformed Synod to get the words inserted "that you seek your life not in yourselves, but only in Jesus Christ your Saviour." Even that little was thought by some to go "too far."

This weakness has perhaps not a little to do with the almost proverbial hesitancy on the part of many Reformed people to come out with a personal testimony about their salvation. An age-long misunderstanding of the doctrine of election undoubtedly lies at the bottom of this hesitation; but it would lead us too far afield to enter into this matter here.

Be it stated here only that the third question asked upon the occasion of Adult Baptism is the only satisfactory exception in the liturgy presently used in Christian Reformed Churches. For there it is asked: "Do you believe that Jesus Christ, who is both true and eternal God and very man, who assumed His human nature from the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, is given you of God as a Saviour; and that you by this faith receive remission of sins in His blood, and that you by the power of the Holy Spirit became a member of Christ and of His Church?"

This is a confession of *faith,* and not merely of an assent to doctrine plus a statement concerning a striving after salvation. And such confession I found expressed more adequately in the one-sentence question asked by the Presbyterian minister than in the entire Form for Infant Baptism used in the Christian Reformed Churches.

Another Change Needed

Should we continue to bind ourselves to the Form for Infant Baptism, we should do well to take another look at the prayer before baptism.

There is in prayer room only for *adoration, thanksgiving, confession* and *petition.* Bits of exegetical information, directed either at God, or implicity at the congregation, are out of place in a prayer. The statement that Pharaoh and all his host were drowned in the Red Sea and Israel was led through the midst of the Sea on dry ground, by which baptism was signified, is *not* prayer. Noah and his flood and family, together with Pharaoh and all his host, should be removed from the prayer. They might, at best, belong in the body of the Form, or in a sermon on baptism, but they are definitely out of place in a prayer.

Second: The Form for the Solemnization of Marriage

The present Form for the Solemnization of Marriage in Christian Reformed Churches is undoubtedly an improvement upon the older Form. It is, in fact, as good as any that has come to the attention of the writer. It is certainly superior to one that affords a last-minute opportunity to allege "impediments" to a ceremony already in progress. There is, however, one valid criticism of the present Form that has been suggested to the writer.

Upon three different occasions, and in three various States, I have met with young couples who requested that a different Form be used. Going over the accepted Form with them, I found upon each occasion that the objection was to these words, "The purpose of marriage is the propagation of the human race, the furtherance of the kingdom of God, and the enrichment of the lives of those entering this state."

As one young man, raised on a dairy farm and educated at Calvin College, expressed it: "I hate

to think of my bride being described in public as an animal whose chief reason for getting married is for purposes of breeding."

This was a rather blunt expression, admittedly, of a delicate matter. Nevertheless, there is truth in this objection. The view that the first purpose of marriage is "the propagation" (a somewhat crude term) of the human race, is *not* the Reformed view of marriage. It is, rather, the Roman Catholic view.

While it remains true that God, in the beginning of time, said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," it is just as true that God spoke, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." Logically, as well as in point of time, the latter saying of God preceded the former. That the man needed a wife was spoken before the creation of Eve; that the two were to replenish the earth was said after her creation.

The purpose, then, of the completion, of the fulfillment of human life, antecedes that of "propagating" the race. The elder in my first congregation who icily announced that "a childless marriage is a failure," was in error.

I propose, therefore, that the Form for Marriage shall be amended to the following simple extent. "The purpose of marriage is the completion of personality and the enrichment of the lives of those entering this state, the continuance of the human race, and by means of these the furtherance of the kingdom of God."

Third: An Historical Inaccuracy

On page 74 of the final section of the recently revised *Psalter Hymnal,* in the "Introductory" to the Liturgy, these words occur: "The forms for the public confession of faith, etc. . . . were not inherited by us from the Churches in the Netherlands, but are original compositions, which were adopted by our Church during the present century."

This statement is incorrect in regard to the *Form for the Public Profession of Faith,* to say the least. The writer should know, since he is the one who introduced this Form.

Although he is at present unable to refer to the exact year, he remembers the occasion and circumstances without error. The questions now in use for a public confession of faith in the Christian Reformed Church had been formulated and adopted by the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Yet the Christian Reformed Synod hesitated to adopt the questions because they were vehemently spoken against by a Kampen Seminary professor (who afterwards left those churches). At the following Christian Reformed Church Synod the matter was taken up once more. The questions were taken over verbatim with added opening and closing paragraphs so as to embody the questions into a Form for Public Confession. It is therefore not quite correct to state of the entire Form that it is "an original composition," and I suggest an amendment to the statement on page 74.

Which Belgic Confession? (IV)

by Leonard Verduin

Article 36 of the Belgic Confession deals with the question as to the *raison d'être* of the magistracy, the *why* of government. Very closely related to this question is the question as to the relationship of Church and State.

All through medieval times there were two schools of thought touching these matters; both were live options in the days of the Reformation. The Reformers had to choose between them. One of these was basically monistic; the other was basically dualistic.

The prevailing view in medieval times was that Church and State are related to each other as the warp and the woof of a piece of cloth are related. In this view of things the two are complementary and component parts of a single system. A medieval theologian, Peter Damian, who died in 1073, actually drew a parallel between the mysterious confluence of the two natures in Christ in a single person and the equally mysterious confluence of the office of the magistrate and the office of the priesthood. In this view there can of course be no such thing as "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." In this system there can be no such thing as separation of Church and State. In it God's program as Creator and His program as Redeemer are indifferentiable; God's common grace and His special grace flow imperceptibly together; as do His general revelation and His special. This view is monistic.

But all through medieval times there was also a contrary view, the view of the "heretic." Born in reaction against the confusion of Church and State which was a feature of post-Constantinian times, this view tended to make Church and State two unrelated interests, two programs that had nothing to

do with each other. This view was said to be essentially dualistic.[1] It was in the noise of the battle between these two views that Article 36 had to pick its troubled way.

IT IS INHERENTLY A PART OF THE MONISTIC VIEW OF medieval Sacralism that the magistrate has a double duty, one in the area of the State and one in the area of the Church. In this view the magistrate is, as medieval thinkers put it, the care-taker-of-*both*-tables of the Law of God; in this view the civil ruler is responsible for man's relationship to his Maker (the first table of the Decalog) and he is responsible for man's relationship to his fellow (the second table of the Decalog).

The medieval church was squarely committed to the idea of care-taker-of-both-tables, and it was this commitment that led that church to its frightful record of heresy-hunting and heretic-killing.

The Reformers drifted toward the monism of the middle ages in regard to the *raison d'être* of the State and they fell heir to the idea that the magistrate is care-taker-of-both-tables. It may be said that they did their least acceptable work at this point. No Protestant of today, certainly no Protestant in the New World, can be at peace with the formulations constructed by them — witness the fact that everywhere Article 36 of the Belgic Confession has been repudiated in one way or another.

The native sons of Flanders had agonized over the problem of the *raison d'être* of the civil office. They had pondered the question of keeper-of-both-tables. And they had found it to be a knotty problem, so knotty that they had gone to their elder brother, to Emden, with it. To the question what is the *raison d'être* of the magistracy they of Emden had replied: "The end for which God Almighty has established this order is not to be sought in the magistracy itself but in the honor of God and the edification[2] of the Christian church."[3] It will be noted that in this formula the medieval heretics' idea of the civil order is waved to one side; the magistracy does not exist by itself as a sort of second interest of the Almighty. It finds its ultimate *raison d'être* in the Church of Christ, in God's redemptive enterprise. In this way Emden avoided the essentially dualistic solution of the medieval heretic.

But they of Emden likewise stopped short of keeper-of-both-tables. They steered clear of the medieval synthesis, in which the sword of the magistrate constitutes the "other arm" of the church. They seem not to have been ready for the monism of classical Sacralism.

Not so the theologians at Geneva. These were squarely committed to the idea of keeper-of-both-tables. This doctrine was written unambiguously into the French Confession.[4] And in his *Institutes* John Calvin had said that "the duty of the magistrate . . . extends to both tables of the Law."[5] To make himself unmistakably clear he had rebuked the "folly" of those who "restrict the magistrates to the administration of justice between man and man."[6] And to show that this was not mere theory with Calvin we need only to point to the burning of Servetus. "The Spaniard" was made to feel the weight of the sword of the magistrate because he had been convicted of violation of the First Table's commands as interpreted by the theologians at Geneva. (It must be noted that no one lodged so much as a syllable against the man touching any infraction of the requirements of the Second Table.)

So much had the camp of the Reformers by this time committed itself to Sacralism, that when a veritable flood of censure for Calvin's awful deed rolled in on him[7] and his friends rushed in to help him in his distress they based their argument on the doctrine of keeper-of-both-tables. Melanchthon, for example, who wrote in an effort to console: "all posterity owes and will owe a debt of gratitude to you for that you have . . . burned the Spaniard," based on it his appraisal of the burning.

WE HAVE INTIMATED THAT MANY PEOPLE IN THE Europe of those days were outraged at the news of the Servetus execution, as was indeed the case. Most of the censure originated with people who had caught the spirit of the northern Renaissance; some

1. Throughout the centuries men and groups that opposed the Sacralist formula were accused of being dualistic, even though no trace of metaphysical dualism could be detected among them. The ascription of dualism became a part of every assault upon the "heretic." It was heard (and is still being heard) in the polemic against the Anabaptists — who fell heir to the medieval rebellion against Sacralism. The time has come to ask whether the "dualism" of the Anabaptists was more objectionable than the "monism" of the orthodoxy of the times.

2. The original has *stichtinge*, a word that may be rendered either *edification* or *establishment*.

3. Cf. Meiners, *Oostvrieschlandts Kerkelijke Geschiedenis*, II, 614.

4. The French Confession puts the sword in the hands of the magistrate "*pour reprimer les peches commis, non seulement contre le Seconde Table des Commandemens de Dieu, mais aussi contre le premiere.*"

5. *Institutes*, IV, 20:9. Curiously enough, Calvin says at this point that "even if Scriptures did not teach this we might learn it from profane writers; for no man has discoursed of the duty of magistrates, without beginning with religion and divine worship. . . ." He seems to have been blissfully unaware of it that the Sacralism for which he was breaking a lance was indeed an ethnic or pre-Christian thing — as indeed it was, appropriated from pagan Rome in the days of Constantine.

6. *Loc. cit.*

7. Calvin himself complained that in regard to the Servetus affair "dogs bark at me from every side"; and he complained that the bitterest pill of all was that so many who were on the side of the Reform assailed him for it. So great was his sense of insecurity touching the matter that he asked all his colleagues to sign a bill endorsing the killing of the heretic, a service some refused to render. At this time the celebration of the Lord's Supper was postponed once for sure, and probably more than once, because of the tensions within the Genevan flock itself.

of it came from the extreme left. But enough had been said by theologians of unquestioned orthodoxy which if taken to heart would have prevented the burning. To give just a sample of this: the Reformer Brenz (who had written a tract on the question *Whether a Magistrate May With Fire and Sword Execute the Heretic?* — a tract that served mightily to put an end at last to the barbarism practiced all through medieval times upon the religious dissident)[8] wrote: "We must distinguish between two kinds of offence, spiritual and civil. To the former kind belong such things as unbelief, despair, despondence, misinterpreting the Scriptures, heresy, secret ill-will . . . which offend God but do not disturb the public quiet. Among the infractions of the latter sort are treason, theft, murder . . . whatever disturbs outward tranquility. For these two sorts of violation God has ordained two kinds of swords and punishments; spiritual offences are punished by the Word of God and civil infractions are punished by the sword of the emperor. . . . If now the sword of the emperor intrudes into the area that belongs to the Gospel and the Word of God and punishes such sins as unbelief and heresy, then confusion rather than peace will result, and the sword will be blunted through misuse in an office that does not pertain to it. . . . If heretics break through and commit sedition, murder, or some other crime, then and not until then, are they subject to the correction of the civil power. The fact of heresy is as such irrelevant; offences are punished in the cases of heretics on precisely the same grounds as when committed by folk of evident orthodoxy. In a word, unbelief and heresy do not belong to the sphere of the civil ruler."

These and similar teachings of the early days of the Reform — when the Reform had not as yet returned to the Sacralist formula — had not gone without effect on the native sons of Flanders. To the contrary, they had made a deep impression on them. The anti-Sacralism of these teachings led Jean Taffin, for instance (life-time friend of our de Brès), to reply when asked specifically to state his ideas as to the *raison d'être* of the civil office: "The magistrate exists not to establish religion but to protect it; he is obliged to see to it that every man has the opportunity to serve God as required by his own conscience." This is, of course, an outright repudiation of the whole Sacralist formula and it scuttles entirely the old idea of keeper-of-both-tables.

We are in position now to examine the text of Article 36 as it originally stood — as well as the text as it was made to read at the Revision Synod. We shall discover that 1561 assigns but a single duty to the magistrate, and that 1566 assigns two duties, one for each table of the Law.

At this point we will have to become a bit technical; we cannot avoid getting involved in the niceties of French syntax. As the doctor says, this will hurt a little. But we promise to perform the operation with as much dispatch and with as little pain as the practice will allow.

First of all it will be necessary to have the original text before us. We shall print it, with an English translation as literal as possible; and we shall arrange these in parallel columns, as follows.

The Text of 1561	English Translation
"Nous croyons finalement que nostre bon Dieu à cause de la depravation du genre humain a ordonné des Rois, Princes, et Magistrats, voulant que le monde soit gouverné par leurs loix et polices, afin que le desbordement des hommes soit reprimé, et que tout se conduisse par bon ordre entre les humains. Pour ceste fin il a mis le glaive en la main du Magistrat pour punir les meschans et maintenir les bons et gens de bien. Et non seulement leur office est, de reprimer et veiller sur la politique, ains aussi sur les choses ecclesiastiques, pour oster et ruiner toute idolatrie et fause service de Dieu, pour destruire le royaume de l'Antechrist, et avancer le Royaume de Iesus Christ, faire prescher la parole de l'Evangile par tout, afin que Dieu soit honnoré et servi d'un chascun comme il requiert par sa Parole."	"Finally do we believe that our good God, on account of the depravity of humankind, has instituted Kings, Princes, Magistrates, desirous that the world be governed by their laws and policing, in order that the excesses of men be held in check, and everything done in good order among men. To this end He has placed the sword in the hand of the magistrate unto the punishment of the bad and the support of the good. And by no means is their office confined to restraining and defending in matters political but extends also to matters ecclesiastical, unto the elimination and demolition of all idolatry and false service of God, the breaking down of the kingdom of Antichrist and the promotion of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, the causing to be preached the Word of the Gospel everywhere, to the end that God may be honored and served by every man even as He requires in His Word.

We wish to repeat and say with emphasis that in this whole passage one and only one duty is ascribed to the magistrate, the duty of keeping order by punishing the bad and supporting the good (*punir les meschans et maintenir les bons*). Nothing is added to this, no further duty or duties. The magistrate's one and only duty is to restrain the bad and sustain the good (*reprimer et veiller*). This one duty is a duty with a positive and a negative side (to sustain *vis-à-vis* the good and to restrain *vis-à-vis* the bad), but it has no companion duty or duties, no duties over and above this one.

In technical language, all that follows (the whole passage beginning with *pour oster et ruiner*) is exegetical of *leur office est, de reprimer et veiller,* and not appositional to it.

This must be said with emphasis. And for various reasons. One of these is that the tradition, controlled as it is by the revision of 1566 (which lists two distinct duties as we shall see), tends to make

8. According to the report of Margaret of Parma's men, they had found the works of this Brenz among de Brès' books and papers.

this point escape us. A second reason is that an ambiguity not present in the French slips in when this material is translated into Dutch,[9] the language in which the Belgic Confession has come down primarily.

The sentence beginning with *Et non seulement* does not introduce a plurality of duties. The purpose of this passage is to show that it is not at all the case (as the tradition of a whole millennium had it) that this duty of restraining (the bad) and sustaining (the good) stops at the point where matters political end and matters ecclesiastical begin. De Brès is at considerable pains to assert that this duty goes right over this dividing line, that it extends *non seulement sur la politique* but extends also *sur les choses ecclesiastiques.* This de Brès says with emphasis — for reasons that will become apparent presently.

The emphatic quality of this assertion beginning with *Et non seulement* is first of all apparent from the word order. De Brès does not say *Et leur office est non seulement,* etc., as we would expect him to say it; he says *Et non seulement leur office est.* This word order is significant. It is as if de Brès wanted to say: "I render emphatic protest against the notion that their office pertains only to the area of the political and I say emphatically that it reaches also into matters that take their origin in the ecclesiastical level."

The emphatic quality of this assertion is further evident from de Brès' use of *ains* (instead of *mais*) in "*ains aussi.*" This conjunctive particle *ains* is not, as is commonly supposed, a now archaic equivalent of the modern *mais.* De Brès used both — but with a rather carefully observed difference. The difference is that he used *mais* in non-controversial connections and *ains* in controversial.[10] What he is saying here was indeed controversial in his times; hence the use of *ains.*

Why this emphasis? Because de Brès wished to shatter an ancient misconception. From times out of memory canon law had limited the magistrates' power of life and death to *la politique* and had granted to the church's judges the power of life and death *sur les choses ecclesiastiques.*[11] The magistrate was permitted to decide whom to shield and whom to suppress in worldly affairs but the Church's dignitaries determined who was to feel the edge of the sword and who was to be protected by it when the issue was that of religion. In matters that took their origin in the area of religion the civil power was the lackey of the Church. It was against this evil, an evil straight from hell, that de Brès and his associates waged incessant warfare, the evil, as a Dutch writer has put it, of *een aan het pausdom slaafsch onderworpen vorstelijk gezag.* To quote but a single passage from a voluminous literature touching this point: in his *Baston* de Brès called upon the magistrates in God's name not "to be any longer the mere bouncers of the pope's wicked brood" (*ne soyez plus des bourreaux de cette meschante vermin*). De Brès felt that if the magistrates would only assume the responsibility of life and death *at all fronts* then better days would be at hand, better days for men as men and better days for the cause of Christ.

In the paragraph under study de Brès also addresses himself to the question of the *raison d'être* of civil rule. Why an order-keeper? Why have the wicked restrained and the virtuous sustained? To what end in the final analysis? And as to this item the advice from Emden touching this very point seems to have been absorbed by de Brès; it is all "unto the elimination and the demolition of all idolatry," etc. This is to say that the final *raison d'être* of government is to be located in the redemptive enterprise.

There is every reason to believe that in de Brès' usage *pour* with the infinitive expresses *result* rather than *purpose* as is the case in modern French (to express purpose he prefers *afin que,* which he uses twice in the present passage). But whether it be the one or the other the point is that the order-keeping serves the redemptive enterprise and is not a sort of *Nebenbezirk.*

The thrust of the entire passage is then that in view of human depravity God has instituted civil government, has placed a sword in its hand for the support of the good and the suppression of the bad, a duty that extends to all levels of human associa-

9. The ambiguity of which we speak results from the fact that *pour* + the infinitive is rendered in Dutch with *om te* + the infinitive, which can then be construed with *En haar ambt is* — a syntax the French will not allow, for it makes no sense to say *leur office est . . . pour,* etc. The Dutch, however, will allow *En haar ambt is om te. . . .*

10. To illustrate, when in Article VIII of the Confession de Brès wishes to say that not the Father nor the Spirit but only the Son became incarnate (a matter in which no opposition would be forthcoming) he writes: "*le pere n'a point prins chair ny aussi le Sainct Esprit mais c'a este seulement le fils;* but when in Article XXXV he wishes to say that when we partake of the body of Christ we do so not with the mouth but with the spirit (a matter in which Lutherans and Catholics alike would object), he writes: "*la maniere par laquelle nous le mangeons n'est pas la bouche ains l'esprit par la foy.*"

11. The great Dutch jurist of the 16th century, Philips Wieland, put the matter most succinctly in these few words: "*Heresie wordt gestraft met vuur; de geestelijcke rechter maeckt het proces en de weereltlijcke doet de executie.*" And in the 13th century the great expert in "both the laws," Philip de Beaumanoir, put this monstrous jurisprudence in words, saying that if a man persists in heresy "*il soit iusticies comme bougre et ars. Mais en tel cas doit aider le laie iustice a Sainte Eglise, car quant aucuns est condamnes comme bougre par l'examination de Sainte Eglise le doit abandonner a le laie iustice et le laie iustice le doit ardoir, porce que le iustice espirituel ne doit nului mettre a mort.*" By this frightful fiction the Church could liquidate, and did liquidate, all who challenged its pretensions. This fiction is taught, *inter alia,* in the papal bull *Unam Sanctam* and is good Catholic doctrine to this day.

tion, a duty which when executed faithfully will help to see the cause of Christ to victory. With this philosophy we cannot quarrel — even though we are committed ardently to separation of Church and State.

THINGS STAND ALTOGETHER DIFFERENTLY WHEN WE go now to an examination of the text as altered in 1566. Here we encounter a view of things that we repudiate in words of one syllable.

Again we give the French original and again we offer a literal translation in a parallel column. In 1566 de Brès' sentence was altered to read:

Et non seulement leur office est, de prendre garde et veiller sur la police, ains aussi de maintenir le sacré ministere, pour oster et ruiner, etc.	And not only is it their duty to stand guard and to watch in the area of public order but also to sustain the sacred ministry, unto the elimination, etc.

Here we have the unambiguous ascription of two duties, one in the area of the secular (*sur la police*) and the other in the area of the sacred ministry; one touching the Second Table and one touching the First. The French will allow no other interpretation. To be a bit technical again, both *prendre garde et veiller sur la police* and *maintenir le sacré ministere* are to be construed with the *est* of *leur office est;* they are strictly appositional.

THE CHANGE OF 1566 PUT SACRALISM IN THE SADdle. With the changed text in hand the Consistories could now go to the Nobles to pressure them (as they did indeed pressure them) to make themselves responsible for the Reform. With this change Reform-espoused-by-ruler became a part of the creed of Dutch Protestantism. With this adjustment of the text the magistrates' duty (?) to suppress all dissent against the "right" religion was stated clearly enough. In this revision began the reversion to the Sacralist formula that was to characterize Dutch Protestantism for the next three centuries, and from which we have only recently escaped (or have we?).

In our next and final article we shall bring the story of Sacralism vs. Compositism down to date.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

SIRS:

I appreciate Mr. DeKoster's invitation to write once again on his article "Operation Suspicion," if his reply to my letter left me unsatisfied. I am very much satisfied that we agree that Communism is American Enemy Number One, that unwholesome suspicion is no real aid in combating it, and that knowledge is a primary requisite in meeting this evil. I would like to make one reply.

I am still unsatisfied in that Mr. DeKoster does not prove his mere assumption that the picture "Operation Abolition" in itself makes people unwholesomely suspicious. It has been my observation that the picture has stimulated many to make a study of Communism so they will be knowledgeably anti-Communist. Mr. DeKoster admits in his reply, "Moreover, I grant in my editorial that if an awareness of danger *is* the positive result of seeing the films, that is all to the good." That is the whole intent of the picture. Why then object to it?

Mr. DeKoster insists on *knowledgeable* anti-Communism. I agree wholeheartedly. But the very picture he criticizes *is* informative. It is an authentic case history of the subtle method of Communism in action. How can one plead for knowledgeable anti-Communism and still reject the picture which gives authentic knowledge?

Among the books Mr. DeKoster lists for our study is J. Edgar Hoover's *Masters of Deceit.* Mr. DeKoster tells us this book too is calculated to make one knowledgeably anti-Communist. The reading of this book has confirmed me in my evaluation of the picture. The book points out the subtlety of Communism. Mr. DeKoster also recognizes Communism as such. The picture does the same thing. And let us not forget that Hoover has released a report to Attorney General William P. Rogers concerning the San Francisco riots in which he referred to them as the most successful Communist coup on the West Coast in the last 25 years. I am inclined to consider his views more reliable than the editor's of *The New York Times.* No one will deny that Mr. Hoover is *knowledgeably* anti-Communist.

As to *The New York Times'* editorial on "Operation Abolition," I must confess it is not at all convincing to me. The students are not pictured as being subversive to Americanism but how they are subtly used as a tool by the Communists. Must not all agree that this is the method of Communism? Archie Brown, one of the Communists involved, said to a news commentator *before* the riot even took place, when he was asked by the commentator what he was doing in the Communist Party these days, "You haven't seen anything yet. Wait till the fireworks begin." This confirms the authenticity of the message of the film.

The editorial in *The New York Times,* to which Mr. DeKoster refers, also criticizes the picture because of the change

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of sequence made in the film. It seems to me that only a "Citizen Keene" would make that criticism. For the change in sequence does not change the message of the picture. The only major change in sequence is that Harry Bridges was taken out before the riot in the picture, whereas in actuality he was removed afterwards. Can one honestly condemn the picture because of this when it does not alter the message of the picture as a whole?

It has been my observation that all the criticism we have been hearing about this picture is generally born out of a subjective and prejudiced evaluation. *The New York Times'* editorial substantiates this. The article confesses its own prejudice when it says, "This whole un-American operation by the Un-American Activities Committee is evidence not of a need of its continuation but need of its abolition — a *course we have urged before*" (italics mine). Prior prejudice against the House Un-American Activities Committee has naturally prejudiced the *Times* against the film and therefore disqualifies it as an objective appraiser. Mr. DeKoster may claim to be in company with the nation's most distinguished newspaper and seek support for his position by virtue of the company he is in. However, by doing so, he places himself in the camp of the prejudiced. This is not knowledgeable anti-Communism. How happy the Communists must be to have their dirty work of abolishing the Un-American Activities Committee done by the objectors to the film. Then the Communists could increase their corroding influence with much less opposition. Then we and our children will be doomed to the Communist enslavement. Freedom will be a lost heritage. And suspicious "Citizen Keene" might be proven right after all.

If one sets aside any prejudice he may have against the House Un-American Activities Committee, and forgets for the moment his so-called academic freedom (which sweeps the Communist peril into the background and focuses all attention on the supposed threat to academic freedom) one can find no serious objection to the picture. In fact, he would spread the message to others that the Communists are past-masters in the art of cleverly controlling a group of well-meaning people to do their dirty work. This is a message every loyal American will endorse.

Let's stop criticizing the picture and spend our efforts in a positive, knowledgeable anti-Communism campaign. The picture does a commendable service in that endeavor. It alerts us to a real danger. Unless we first realize that danger, we will not study to make ourselves knowledgeably anti-Communist.

Sincerely,

FRANK EINFELD

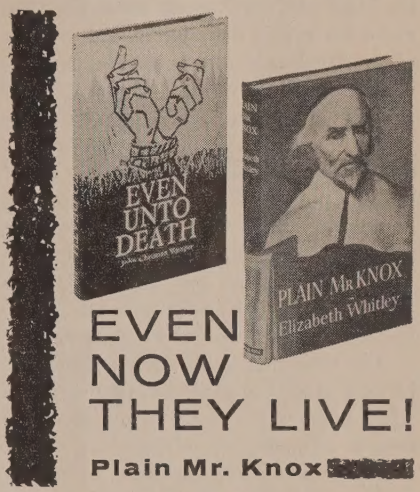
McBain, Michigan

REPLY:

I hope that our readers enjoy as much as do I this friendly exchange with Reverend Einfeld, though I confess to finding him a mite hard to please. We agree, it appears, on the threat of Communism; we agree on the dangers introduced by suspicion; and we agree, too, that knowledge is the "primary requisite" in effectively opposing Communism. Though to all intents we thus march shoulder to shoulder, Reverend Einfeld will not be "satisfied" until he has read my endorsement of at least one of the two films I initially criticized. But satisfy him thus I cannot.

Presumably we might, then, engage in some detailed discussion of the film which he endorses, and I do not, *Operation Abolition.* There is material enough available to us both, for we and our readers know that thousands of words have already swirled about the subject of both films. I observed in my editorial that all this hullabaloo is about as good as being banned in Boston for bringing the films to public attention. But my critique of the films does not rest upon sustaining the cry against their imprecision, important as accuracy in itself is. I suppose they might well be more accurate than I think they are without altering my criticism very much or at all. Let me make this clear.

The reader may recall that my editorial which Reverend Einfeld criticized preceded an article entitled "Anti-Communist Book List." This relation was by design, of course. The aim of the editorial was to suggest that an untutored and emotional anti-Communism tended to breed an unwholesome suspicion, while a knowledgeable and effec-



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tive anti-Communism may be developed by some such course of reading as was then proposed. On this latter point I believe Reverend Einfeld and I are essentially in agreement, but he contests my disparagement of the role which the two films play in developing suspicion.

On this matter we can but disagree. An argument over the intrinsic merits of the films is not likely to resolve this disagreement. Viewing the films as I do helps explain for me some phenomena I discern in the American mind just now. Obviously that is not the case for Reverend Einfeld. He wants "proof" that the films do, in fact, generate suspicion. I can only suggest that he look about him. There is no more ready "proof" of this than there is of his contention that these films stimulate the study of Communism; both are interpretations of our own experience, and you, kind reader, will have to judge between us in terms of your own.

As I sense the public mind right now, in its attitudes towards Communism and what it takes to be Communism, I detect a measure of mistrust of fellow Americans, of certain legislative programs, plus many fears, much disquiet — in short, a clear coloring of "suspicion." This was, I think, in President Kennedy's mind when he spoke recently at the University of Washington.

Now, open and vigorous difference of opinion among Americans is a good thing; but fear and suspicion of each other is, as I described in my editorial, a corroding and insidious enemy of democracy. So I try to understand why some Americans are suspicious, and ask: Why?

Can it be that Americans are finding out that democracy is in fact weaker than Communism? Nonsense! Democracy as we know it out of our *Declaration* and *Constitution* rests upon foundations essentially Christian, historically Calvinist. I believe, and doubt not that Reverend Einfeld does also, that if men everywhere were given clear choice between our democracy and Russian totalitarianism, they would choose overwhelmingly for democracy. The Communist leadership the world over believes this, too, I surmise; for they risk no free elections where they can prevent them. But do all Americans believe it as well? Or are there not — who knows just how many — fellow countrymen doubtful of themselves, of *their* countrymen, their public servants, and their future?

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If so, why so?

One answer which explains much to me is that proposed in my editorial, namely, the effect upon the public mind of the kind of emotional anti-Communism of which I take the films under discussion as illustrative. This kind of anti-Communism does, as the *Christian Century* noted ten months ago, tend to "whip up American emotions." And these whipped-up emotions, finding nothing in this kind of anti-Communism but what Reverend Einfeld himself calls an "alert," too easily become the suspicions which I delineated in Citizen Keene.

My objection to the films is not, therefore, primarily one of inaccuracy of sequence or of mistake in detail. I understand, for example, that *Operation Abolition* exists also in abbreviated form, more accurate in sequence than its longer brother. But in either version, that film may leave the impression that Communists are infinitely clever, that Americans are infinitely gullible, and that "riots" could be whipped up by the Commies almost anywhere, any time; none of which is, in my judgment, true, but all of which could be fuel to over-heated emotions, and burning suspicion. *Communism on the Map,* which Reverend Einfeld may not wish to defend, can well give rise to the illusion that Communism has gobbled up far more lands than in fact it has; that it is already making broad inroads in America, which is false; and that it might take the world on schedule, which is likely only if Americans fall victim to their own suspicions.

In addition, both films can give the misleading impression, which Reverend Einfeld himself seems to have caught, that our *first* line of defense against internal Communist subversion lies in a committee of the Congress, though in truth it surely resides first in the F.B.I., and as much in a deep and continuing faith of the American people in their own way of life — a faith so eloquently expressed by Speaker Rayburn shortly before his death, and a faith which I think is threatened rather than strengthened by the emotional anti-Communism which these films exemplify.

Therefore, though it is tempting to engage Reverend Einfeld in some further dispute over the merits of the films themselves and over the validity of the *New York Times* editorial about one of them — to show, say, among other things, and by fairly evident steps, that

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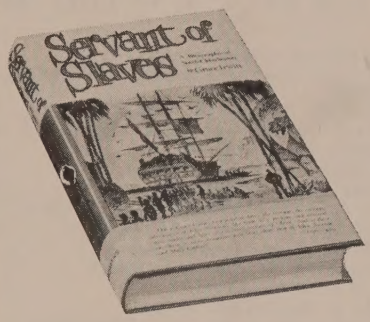

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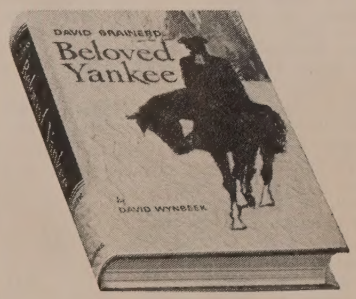

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when he tries to dismiss the *Times* as "prejudiced," he is reasoning precisely as does Citizen Keene (if you differ with him, be you knave or be you fool?) — yet to do so would be to shift my passing references to the intrinsic merits of the films into the center of our discussion. This would only tend to obscure the one point upon which I have sought to lay major emphasis all along, namely: emotional anti-Communism, the kind which lays its stress upon the shock and the "alert," may well lead to insidious suspicion, and is no substitute for sound study.

As I urged at first, see and judge for yourself. If the films lead you, or have done so, to a study of Communism and to a rededication to a vital citizenship, very good! You then exhibit what is Reverend Einfeld's apologia for the films, and he will permit us both sincerely to rejoice together. But, if they lead or have led you into paths of emotionalism and suspicion of fellow Americans — watch out! Citizen Keene was just around the edge of the flickering screen!

This discussion ends with you. Reverend Einfeld has his mind, and I have mine, on these matters. Our way of life protects both of us, and you, in our freedom of discussion, even when he does not wholly satisfy me, nor I him. And it is this way of life which we all wish heartily to preserve, however much our ways to that end may move on parallel rather than on identical paths.

—LESTER DEKOSTER

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